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Letter dated 23 October 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Eritrea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I wish to register my Government's deep concern about the statement issued by the Security Council (SC/8854) on 17 October 2006 with respect to Eritrea's troop movements to the southwestern part of its territory for the purposes of developmental work. By any stretch of international law, Eritrea's troop movements to its own sovereign territory constitutes neither an incursion nor "a major breach" of the Algiers Agreements, as sadly noted in the statement issued (SG/SM/10688) by the Spokesman for the Secretary-General on 16 October 2006. The concern expressed in both statements is misplaced and the blame for not moving forward in the peace process between Eritrea and Ethiopia ought to be placed where it belongs.

The Eritrean Defence Forces, as the working force of the nation, has been involved in building and maintaining the basic infrastructure of the nation in all parts of the country. Eritrea refrained from deploying its defence forces in the southern part bordering Ethiopia with the expectation and hope that the border between Eritrea and Ethiopia would be demarcated expeditiously in accordance with the decision and the already agreed demarcation directives of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission.

Over four years have passed since the Boundary Commission delivered its verdict. At the expense of prolonging the sacrifices of its own people and to the detriment of pursuing its own development policy throughout the country, Eritrea has been exercising maximum restraint. For over four years Eritrea refrained from engaging in any meaningful developmental work in its own territories bordering Ethiopia in order to allow maximum time and opportunity for the Security Council to use its leverage over Ethiopia's intransigence.

In total disregard of the rule of law and Eritrea's unwavering commitment to the Algiers Peace Agreements, the use of the Temporary Security Zone as a buffer zone has been misused and abused by Ethiopia in its repeated violations of the comprehensive Algiers Peace Agreements and by the Security Council in its failure to shoulder its responsibility in enforcing a speedy implementation of the Boundary Commission decision. In this regard, without being deterred by Ethiopia's deliberate policy of holding hostage the Algiers Peace Agreements, Eritrea will exercise its legitimate right of pursuing its development policy, equitably and vigorously, wherever it is needed in its own sovereign territory.

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I wish once again to take this opportunity to reiterate Eritrea's commitment to regional peace and security and to full respect for the rule of law. I do not think it has escaped your keen observation that Eritrea has maintained a good track record of complying with the rule of law by accepting decisions such as the Eritrea-Yemen Arbitration decision of 9 October 1998, the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission decision of 13 April 2002, and the Eritrea-Ethiopia Claims Commission decision of 21 December 2005. In each case, Eritrea had its own reservations, but, as a sign of its firm commitment to the rule of law, it decided to abide by all of the decisions.

Despite having acted in good faith in all of its commitments, Eritrea continues to be treated and targeted unjustly by some members of the Security Council. In this connection, I wish to urge the Security Council to take the necessary steps in the full implementation of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission decision without interfering in the sole mandate of the Commission.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Araya **Desta**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative